

As the fear of a looming recession continues to concern an increasing number of working families across America, we are reminded of the delicate state of our economy. Recognizing the potential financial tribulations on the horizon, it is vital that we in Washington exercise great prudence in our actions as to not further harm the economy. Regrettably, some institutions, like the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), have decided to ignore the real potential for economic devastation by going forward with their haphazard plan for extra border documentation requirements. All while DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff ironically tells the critics of his plan - those who want to grow and not shrink our fragile economy - to "grow up."

Those who live near the northern border are fully aware of the strong and mutually-beneficial relationship the United States has shared with Canada for over 200 years. We share with our neighbors to the north a unique relationship, having families and jobs on both sides of our respective borders – with many claiming us as one community, with only a river running between.

We also recognize that the US-Canada border is a vital channel for travel and commerce, and that Canada and the United States are both each other's largest trade and tourism partner - with over 1.5 billion dollars of trade crossing the border every single day.

It is therefore vital that our border policies take into account the fact that our economies and our very lives are so closely intertwined and inter-dependent. As the economy unfortunately begins to weaken on our side of the border, it is imperative that we not hinder that delicate relationship with our largest trading partner.

However, with the decision by the Department of Homeland Security to rush ahead with flawed and misguided plans regarding the northern border, that is exactly what is happening. Even though they have not met their legal obligations to prepare the public for such a dramatic transition, the Department and this Administration essentially want to flip a switch to move from having the world's largest free economic exchange to requiring cumbersome and untested crossing documentation overnight.

It is now more apparent than ever that DHS and this Administration have lost sight of our special friendship with our northern neighbors, not recognizing that economic and national security are both achievable and not mutually exclusive. They are moving forward with a policy

that could freeze that relationship while doing little to improve our overall security. In what appears to be simply a rush to cross off another item from their checklist the Administration decided to end oral declarations by January 31st 2008, without taking the steps that Congress has expressly laid out in order to protect our nation's economic security.

DHS' decision to ignore the intent of Congress, and therefore the will of the American people, demonstrates indisposition on their part to develop creative solutions for securing the northern border. Regrettably, we are convinced that DHS' proposed plans will unintentionally damage our borders to the vital trade and tourism resulting in an economically disastrous situation for the US and Canadian economies.

We in Congress remain committed to using the power of our collective offices to hold DHS to the obligations set forth by Congress. With the current Administration entrenched in its misguided ways, it is often difficult to steer them on the right course - but it is a fight worth having and one that we will continue to avow. It is not only important to those who live near the northern border, but also to the immensely fragile economy of our nation and working families across the country. As we have fought in the past, and won, to thwart their rushed attempt to require passports, we shall in the same spirit work to prevent the termination of oral declarations.

Together, we are confident we will succeed in producing real solutions for a smart and secure border. We must work together to find a common sense alternative that will keep the US-Canada friendship strong while keeping our borders both secure and open for business.